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SUBJECT: TURKEY: POL-MIL ROUND-UP: MARCH 2009

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Classified By: Deputy Pol-Mil Counselor Christopher Rich, Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

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Turkey-Iraq Military Cooperation in the Works

¶1. (C) TGS Deputy Chief Hasan Igsiz visited Baghdad on March 4 and met with Iraqi Defense Minister Jassem in Baghdad. Igsiz said Ankara was prepared to increase support for the Iraqi army and proposed that the two sides sign a memorandum of understanding (in lieu of a formal agreement) regarding the issue. The two also discussed the fight against PKK but did not bring up the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq.

Exercise Egemen

¶2. (C) March 30 marked the successful completion of the two-week invitational fleet training Exercise Egemen hosted by Turkey. Turkish, U.K, U.S., Dutch and Belgian naval assets participated in this exercise, which sought to improve interoperability among participating countries in maritime and amphibious operations. In coordination with Embassies Athens and London, we were able to address concerns raised by the Government of Greece, which allowed for the successful execution of the exercise. We appreciate the close cooperation provided by colleagues at these posts.

Turkish Military Academies Commander in China

¶3. (SBU) During a visit to China on March, Turkish Military Academies Commander Gen. Hasan Kasay said that Turkey and China should consider expanding talks to include joint military exercises in addition to existing educational exchanges. According to media accounts, China has received 18 military delegations comprising 200 people from Turkey since 1985, while Turkey received 14 Chinese military delegations with more than 330 representatives in the same period. China,s Deputy Chief of General Staff General Ge Zhenfeng reportedly said China expected to receive more Turkish military students in coming years.

Suspects arrested in connection with Diyarbakir attack:

¶4. (SBU) Ten PKK militants were arrested this month in connection with the 2006 bombing attack in Diyarbakir. The suspects were captured in six provinces. Reports indicate three of the suspects played a direct role in the attack, while two others were involved in planning the bombing.

Turkey,s Security Relations With Other Countries

¶5. (SBU) Georgia: PM Erdogan and Georgian President Saakashvili inaugurated on March 5 the border crossing between their two countries. The Sarp border gate was reconstructed by Turkish Union of Chambers (TOBB). At the border, Saakashvili called Erdogan his "brother" and noted that Erdogan was one of the rare statesmen that "kept his promises."

¶6. (SBU) Iran: President Abdullah Gul and Foreign Minister Babacan visited Tehran March 10-11 to attend the Economic Cooperation Organization Summit. Iranian President Mahmood Ahmadinejad visited Istanbul March 16-17 to attend the World Water Forum.

¶7. (SBU) Serbia: Serbian FM Jeremic visited Ankara March 19. Media reports note that Turkey and Serbia set their disagreements on the Kosovo issue aside and agreed to work for stability and peace in the Balkans.

¶8. (SBU) Israel: FM Babacan met in Brussels with Israeli counterpart Tzipi Livni on the margins of a March 5 NATO Foreign Ministerial meeting. The two agreed to work for the strengthening of bilateral strategic relations. This marked the first political meeting of senior Turkish and Israeli officials in the aftermath of PM,s outburst at Davos. (ref a)

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Jeffrey